

The
OTER

VOLUME 44 NUMBER 4

April 2005

Calendar (League activities in bold)

April 2005

- 13 W Morning **Running & Winning Event**
Overbrook High School
- 19 Tu 6:00 p.m. County Freeholder Caucus
16th floor, Camden Co. Courthouse, Camden
- 21 Th 7:00 p.m. County Freeholder Meeting
Collingswood Theater, Collingswood
- 29 F Evening Opening of LWFVNJ Convention
Continues into Sunday, May 2

May 2005

- 2 M 10:00 a.m. **Voter Registration**
After the naturalization ceremony, Federal
Courthouse, Camden.
- 4 W 7:30 p.m. **LWFVCC Board Meeting**
Phyllis Black's house (this is a change)
- 17 Tu 6:00 p.m. County Freeholder Caucus
16th floor, Camden Co. Courthouse, Camden
- 19 Th 7:00 p.m. County Freeholder Meeting
James Bud Mullen Community Center
29 East Browning Road, Bellmawr

- 21 Sa 12 - 2:30 p.m. **LWFVCC Annual Meeting**
Regency Palace, Mt. Laurel

June 2005

- 1 W 6:30 p.m. **LWFVCC Board Meeting**
Renée Robbins' house

At its April 2005 meeting the LWFVCC board:

1. Voted to donate \$500 to the LWFVNJ in honor of outgoing President Anne Maiese.
2. Agreed to renew our membership in the UN Association.
3. Set aside funds for taping the county candidates forum, should they be needed.
4. Accepted the budget for presentation at the annual meeting
5. Agreed to send a letter to the county administrator on the topic of caucus meetings.
6. Voted to charge \$30 per attendee at the annual meeting.
7. Accepted Martha McGee's resignation from the board.

THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF CAMDEN COUNTY

PRESIDENT’S MESSAGE:

It’s a good thing the longer days and warmer temperatures are kicking in now, because the energy needed for League work seems to increase too. Lisa Castellani has done an outstanding job of coordinating our moderators and timekeepers for multiple forums for school board elections and for the non-partisan municipal elections on May 10. My thanks to moderators Ed Gracely, Ann Koopman, Donna Lawrence, Winne Rowell-Bullard and Bill Skinner; and timekeepers Ellen Farrell, Ann Saunders, Barbara Sielaff and Marcy Susman. They *are* the League to the public, and they represent us very well.

The “Running & Winning” Workshop has become another important face of the League. My thanks to all who made us look terrific on April 13 at Overbrook Senior High School in Pine Hill: Phyllis Black, Winnie Branton, Lisa Castellani, Zena Cohen, Martha Kaplan, Donna Lawrence, Rosemary Leach, Marcia Lugger, Bobbie Porter, Renée Robbins, Winne Rowell-Bullard, Ann Saunders, and Joan Wells. With the help of many great friends from AAUW and Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc., we made quite an impression—not only on the girls, but on school personnel and the politicians. (We may even get some new members!)

What’s coming up next?

1. The LWVNJ Convention, April 29 – May 1. Your delegates (Ann Koopman, Ann Saunders, Winne Rowell-Bullard, and I) and Ed Gracely (LWVNJ treasurer), will be approving a budget, officers and directors, and program items for the next two years. The “Jersey Girls,” the group of widows who made the 9/11 Commission happen, will be the honored guests at the banquet on Saturday evening.
2. Our LWVCC Annual Meeting & Luncheon, 12—2:30 p.m., May 21, at the Ramada Inn, Fellowship Rd and Rt. 73 in Mt. Laurel. Like LWVNJ, we will also be approving a budget, officers and directors, and our program items. We will recognize several outstanding members and hear your “directions to the Board.” In addition, former Camden County Freeholder Laurelle A. Cummings will share her experiences “Breaking Into the ‘Good Ole Boys’ Club,” and you will have an assortment of great items to select during the Silent Auction. See p. 6 for more details.

In League,
Anne

The League of Women Voters is a nonpartisan political organization of men and women that encourages the informed and active participation of citizens in government and influences public policy through education and advocacy.

The League of Women Voters of Camden County, LWVCC Voice Mail Line: (856) 795-7878

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***The VOTER* is published ten times a year to keep the membership and public informed of the activities of the League of Women Voters of Camden County. For subscription or membership information call (856) 795-7878.**

Getting there - Directions!

Bellmawr: James Mullen Community Center, 35 E. Browning Rd, Bellmawr. Take 295 to 168 South. Browning is in about 0.4 miles. Turn left. In about a block, the building is on the left. *The 400 bus runs up and down Route 168 from Turnersville hourly or more often evenings.*

Camden County Courthouse: Take 676 north to Mickel Blvd. Flow right at the fork (don't go on Campbell Place), then turn right onto 5th street in a few blocks. The courthouse is at 5th and Federal, a block up from Mickel.

Camden, Federal Courthouse: 4th and Cooper, but we generally car pool. Call 856-795-7878 if you're interested. *About 3-4 blocks from the City Hall PATCO station.*

Collingswood Theater 315 White Horse Pike, Collingswood. Take 295 or King's Highway to Route 30 (WHP) north. Pass Nicholson and Cuthbert, then Collings Ave. The theater is about 3 blocks north of Collings Ave on Route 30. *The Collingswood PATCO station is over a mile from the theater, but the 403 bus runs up Route 30 ~ hourly in the evening. It stops in the Lindenwood and Camden PATCO stations.*

Gloucester City: Mary Ethel Costello School 520 Cumberland Street, Gloucester City. Take 295 S to 676 N. After a brief ride, take the Gloucester/Mt. Ephraim exit. At the top of the ramp, turn left onto Market Street. In about 1 mile, turn right onto Broadway for just a block or 2, then turn left onto Cumberland Street. The school isn't far from there.

Mt. Laurel, Ramada Inn: Fellowship Road and Route 73. Fellowship Road crosses Route 73 a few tenths of a mile south of 295 and a short distance north of the Turnpike.

Death Penalty Activities -- LWVNJ

As a follow-up to establishing a position, the LWVNJ tries to take action and educate the public on our decision. Already, two steps have been taken in that direction:

1. Testimony on the process of lethal injection, and in opposition to the death penalty, by LWVNJ board member Edith Frank. She spoke to the Department of Corrections on February 4th, and is pictured doing so in the recent NJ Voter.
2. Development of a death penalty brochure. A colourful flier is in nearly final form. It provides information on the death penalty and its many flaws, presents the LWVNJ position in opposition to capital punishment, and suggests actions readers can take.

2,000 copies will be ordered initially, to be distributed at Convention. Undoubtedly, they will be widely used, given to members of the Assembly and Senate, etc.

Voter QUIZ!

1. This year the LWVCC nominating committee is proposing:
 - a. A single president
 - b. Co-presidents
 - c. A triumvirate - 3 presidents
2. Can you name the proposed president(s)?
3. Laurelle Cummings is:
 - a. A former county freeholder
 - b. Our annual meeting speaker
 - c. Lead singer of a rock group, The Laurelles
 - d. a and b
 - e. All of the above.

Answers can be found on pages 5 and 6.

New Jersey Citizens Guide to Government

Dear Friend of the League:

The 2005 edition of the *New Jersey Citizens Guide to Government* is now available. The *Guide* is published by the LWV of New Jersey after January government reorganization so that information is more complete and up-to-date. This pocket-sized handbook provides a wealth of information.

- Alphabetical listing of towns with voting districts
- State legislative and U.S. congressional districts, listed by town
- Current names, addresses, telephone and fax numbers of all state legislators and the New Jersey congressional delegation
- Registration and voting information
- Political party information and locations
- National, state, county and municipal governmental information
- Information on the court system
- Information on the N.J. State Constitution

The cost per copy is \$5.00, which includes postage and handling. For orders of 10 or more the quantity price is \$4.00 per copy.

Please make check payable to: League of Women Voters of Camden County

**Return this form or your invoice with check to: League of Women Voters of Camden County
PO Box 245
Voorhees, NJ 08045**

For more information, please call: (856) 795-7878 (LWVCC voice mail)

2005 NEW JERSEY CITIZENS GUIDE TO GOVERNMENT

NAME _____ **QUANTITY** _____

ADDRESS _____ **AMOUNT \$** _____

_____ **PHONE** _____

March 15 Camden County Freeholder Caucus Meeting

Martha McGee

Steve Dragros presented a summary of the key elements of the proposed Special Improvement District for Downtown Camden to the Freeholders on behalf of the Downtown Improvement District/The Greater Camden Partnership. One important focus of this presentation was on public safety and cleanliness.

A resolution was introduced by Camden County Freeholder Carmen Rodriguez appointing Laurel Cummings, former County Camden Freeholder, as member and Chair of the County Commission on Women. Mrs. Rodriguez is also the liaison to the Commission on Women.

In my previous report, I stated that the Freeholders went into closed session to discuss the list of resolutions. I have since learned that I misinterpreted what I saw. According to Debra Katz, attorney for the Camden County Freeholder, only matters concerning contracts, land acquisitions, and litigation are discussed in closed session, in accordance with State Statutes. Since they did not discuss the resolutions in open forum, I assumed they were discussing them in closed session, but evidently the resolutions not included in these categories were not discussed during either portion of the meeting.

Candidates for Co-President of the LWVCC

This year, we have two candidates nominated to be co-presidents of the League. They are running as a team, not against each other! Here is an introduction to each of them:

Ellen Anne Saunders

Ellen Ann Saunders has been a member of The League of Women Voters of Camden County since September of 2003 and became a member of the Board in June of 2004. She has served for two consecutive years on the very successful Running and Winning Committee.

Before joining the LWV, Ms. Saunders traveled with the AME Church on several mission trips to South Africa, Zimbabwe, and Zambia.

She has been a successful entrepreneur and business owner since 1984 and has received numerous entrepreneurial awards including the Wharton School and the Philadelphia Chamber of Commerce.

Ms Saunders has a Master Degree in Organizational Development from Antioch and successfully completed the General Management program for senior executives at Dartmouth Amos Tuck School of Business.

Meredith Accoo

Meredith Accoo has been a member of the League of Women Voters of Camden County since September 2001. She began working on the LWVCC Running and Winning Committee in 2002.

Ms. Accoo earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in English from the University of Maryland and a Juris Doctorate degree from Rutgers School of Law-Camden.

Ms. Accoo is a member of the New Jersey Bar Association, the Association of Black Women Lawyers and the National Bar Association. She currently serves as a hearing officer for the Chester Housing Authority in Chester, Pennsylvania and a volunteer mediator for the Burlington County Courts.

Please Come!

The League of Women Voters of Camden County

2005 Annual Meeting & Luncheon

Saturday, May 21, 2005

Noon – 2:30 p.m.

Ramada Inn

Fellowship Road and Rt. 73, Mt. Laurel

\$30 per person

Breaking into the “Good-Ole Boys” Club

Laurelle A. Cummings

Former Camden County Freeholder

To Attend

Send your check & the form below to: LWVCC, PO Box 245, Voorhees, NJ 08043

Please reply by May 13, 2004

“Yes, I plan to attend the LWVCC 2005 Annual Meeting and Luncheon.”

Name _____ Number Attending _____

Make check out to “LWVCC”

Phone _____ Amount Enclosed _____ (\$30/person)

LWVNJ Recommendations on Property Tax Convention

The issue of a property tax convention is in the news recently, so it seemed timely to review the position taken by the LWVNJ on the matter. In October 2004, President Macmillan and fiscal policy specialist Judy Cambria presented a detailed set of recommendations on this topic to the Property Tax Convention Task Force. Since 11 pages won't fit into the Voter, I condensed it (just a bit!). Here are some key issues from the LWVNJ's perspective:

The League believes that an appropriately structured Property Tax Convention, with the power to recommend changes both to the New Jersey Constitution and to statutes, has the capability of successfully developing a property tax relief plan for the consideration and vote of New Jersey citizens.

The League supports amendments to the New Jersey Constitution, and revisions to existing laws, which eliminate inequities in the current system of property taxation, ensure greater uniformity in the application of property taxes, reduce property taxes as a share of overall public revenue, lessen the dependence of local government on property taxes, and provide alternative means, including possible increases in other taxes, of funding local government services.

The proposed property tax relief plan should be revenue neutral. This means there should be no increase or decrease in total revenues.

The League strongly opposes giving delegates the power to determine spending. There are established, lengthy procedures that take months of preparation, which already govern the development and approval of budgets at the various levels. The convention would flounder and fail if it entered the quagmire of considering spending at the municipal, school, county and state level.

The Task Force, and the legislation it puts forward, should be permitted to consider all types of taxes. This includes a statewide equalized property tax.

The League unequivocally believes that convention delegates must be restricted from changing the Education clause of the New Jersey Constitution that requires the state to provide a "thorough and efficient system of education for all children".

It is unrealistic to believe we will be able to draw new election district lines for the property tax convention election. The most reasonable scenario is to use present districts for New Jersey State Senate and Assembly seats. Election of two delegates per district will provide a small, reasonably sized body.

The Task Force should have as a goal a nonpartisan, not a bipartisan convention. Property Tax Reform is not, and should not be used, for partisan purposes. Sitting legislators should be barred from participation as delegates. They have had ample opportunity to address the issue. A small proportion of appointed delegates (10-12 depending on size of convention), should be appointed by a nonpartisan group to achieve broader representation of existing expertise (based on experience and background and commitment to property tax reform), and to achieve greater diversity.